



As the Holidays Return, so Return Holiday Returns

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MADISON – Just as retail stores gear up for items to fly off the shelves over the holidays, they also plan for a huge number of returns, refunds and exchanges. While many stores have more lenient return policies during the holiday season than they do the rest of the year, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reminds consumers that it is still their responsibility to understand each store's specific rules before buying a gift for a loved one or friend.

"Before you spend money on a gift, check store policies to see whether returning that gift will cost you more," said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. "Many retailers charge a restocking fee for electronic items, and the fee may increase if the package is opened."

Each business is responsible for setting its own return guidelines. Wisconsin law regulates whether the return guidelines are represented accurately. If the store's policy is not posted, ask a salesperson or manager about the policy before making a purchase.

To ensure an easy return, refund or exchange for an item that you purchase this holiday season, consider the following tips:

- Know that different stores have different policies. Policies may differ by item purchased, as well. Be familiar with each store's policies before you make a purchase.
- Keep your receipts or get a gift receipt. Many stores will not honor a return or refund request without a receipt.
- Pay attention to the time frame allotted by the retailer for returns. Find out if the countdown to the last day for returns begins on the date of original purchase of the item or on the date the item was received as a gift.
- As you're wrapping gifts, leave the price tags and UPC codes intact and keep the original packaging. Some stores charge a restocking fee for opened items or those without their packaging.
- Understand any conditions that apply when you buy items on clearance or sale. Some stores may not allow you to return these items.
- If you are shopping by phone or online, find out who pays return shipping fees if you have a problem with the product. Does the retailer pay those fees or does the consumer? Are return shipping fees deducted from the refund amount?

If you believe a retailer is not honoring its posted return policy, file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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